

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for retrieving and processing stored information ~~in a network containing address data, comprising the steps of:~~
 sending a message to a central computer in ~~[[the]]~~ a network identifying a remote computer and indicating that the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information ~~from address data;~~
 receiving a processing message from the central computer including address data, for retrieval of the stored information, wherein the address data is which has been selected by the central computer so as to optimize the retrieval of the stored information based on at least one characteristic of the remote computer; and
 retrieving and processing the stored information from the address data and processing the retrieved information.[: and]]
 ~~sending the processed information from the address data to a predetermined storage location.~~
2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said at least one~~ characteristic of the remote computer ~~comprises a measure of the network connectivity of that remote computer~~ optimizing retrieval of the stored information further comprises minimizing the cost of the retrieval of the stored information.

3. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~[[2]]~~ 1, wherein ~~said measure of~~ optimizing retrieval of the stored information further comprises analyzing a measure of ~~[[the]]~~ network connectivity of the remote computer ~~is determined~~ with reference to at least one of ~~[[the]]~~ a plurality of server computers to which the remote computer is connected.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of selecting said address data further includes a comparison of a processing characteristic of the remote computer with a priority listing of the address data.

5. (original) The method of claim 4, wherein said priority listing for a particular data address is determined on the basis of activity at that address.

6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said at least one~~ characteristic of selecting said address data further includes an evaluation of the remote ~~computer comprises~~ the time historically taken by that remote computer to process one unit of address data.

7. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol based network.

8. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a local area network.

9. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the address data comprises a location of stored information on the Internet.

10. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the remote computer is directly connected to the computer on which the information to be retrieved is stored, such that the remote computer is able to retrieve said information without using the Internet.

11. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of sending a message to the central computer is initiated in response to a message from the central computer to ascertain if the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information from address data.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising sending the processed information to a predetermined storage location, wherein the processed information is stored in the remote computer and sent to the predetermined storage location at predetermined times.

13. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the processing message includes a task and [[the]] raw data, and the raw data is processed in accordance with the task.

14. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the address data comprises a batch of URLs (Universal Resource Locators).

15. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the processed information is sent to the central computer in a compressed and streamed format.

16. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the processed information is stored on at least one server computer communicating with the remote computer and the central computer.

17. (currently amended) A method for retrieving and processing stored information in a network containing address data, which is categoriz[[s]]ed into a priority listing, comprising ~~the steps of:~~

sending a message from a remote computer to a central computer in the network identifying the remote computer and indicating that the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information ~~from address data;~~

receiving the message in the central computer and comparing the identity of the remote computer to stored identities for remote computers in the central computer;

in response to a failure to identify the remote computer in the stored identities, optionally assigning an identity for the remote computer and a predetermined characteristic;

in response to a match identifying the remote computer in the stored identities, retrieving ~~at least one~~ a characteristic of the remote computer from stored characteristics in the central computer;

assigning and sending a processing message to the remote computer including address data selected by comparison of ~~at least one~~ the characteristic of the remote computer with the priority listing of the address data to retrieve, wherein said characteristic of the remote computer comprises a measure of network connectivity of the remote computer, and said address data is selected in such a way as to minimize the communication cost of connection with the remote computer;

retrieving and processing information from the address data by the remote computer; and

sending the processed information from the address data to a predetermined storage location.

18. (canceled)

19. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~[[18]]~~ 17, wherein said measure of the network connectivity of the remote computer is determined with reference to at least one of ~~[[the]]~~ a plurality of server computers to which the remote computer is connected.

20. (currently amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the step of selecting said address data further includes a comparison of a processing characteristic of the remote computer with a priority listing of the address data.

21. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein said priority listing for a particular data address is determined on the basis of activity at that address.

22. (original) The method of claim 21, wherein said priority listing for a particular data address is determined on the basis of the frequency of updating the information at that address, or on the basis of the level of functionality associated with the information at that address.

23. (currently amended) The method of claim 17, wherein said ~~at least one~~ characteristic of the remote computer further comprises the time historically taken by that remote computer to process one unit of address data.

24. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol based network.

25. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a local area network.
26. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the address data comprises a location of stored information on the Internet.
27. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the remote computer is directly connected to the computer on which the information to be retrieved is stored, such that the remote computer is able to retrieve said information without using the Internet.
28. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the step of sending a message to the central computer is initiated in response to a message from the central computer to ascertain if the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information from address data.
29. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein processed information is stored in the remote computer and sent to the predetermined storage location at predetermined times.
30. (currently amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the processing message includes a task and [[the]] raw data, and the raw data is processed in accordance with the task.
31. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the address data comprises a batch of URLs (Universal Resource Locators).
32. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the processed information is sent to the central computer in a compressed and streamed format.

33. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein the predetermined storage location is at least one server computer communicating with the remote computer and the central computer.

34. (currently amended) A remote computer for a system of retrieving and processing stored information ~~in a network containing address data~~, comprising:

a message initiator to send a message to a central computer in ~~[[the]]~~ a network identifying the remote computer and indicating that the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information ~~from address data~~;

a message receiver for receiving a processing message from the central computer including address data ~~which has been~~ selected by the central computer by comparison of ~~at least one~~ a characteristic of the remote computer with a priority listing of the address data~~[[:]]~~, wherein the characteristic comprises a measure of network connectivity of the remote computer, and wherein the address data is selected in such a way as to minimize the communication cost of connection with the remote computer;

a processor for retrieving and processing information from the address data; and
a transmitter to send the processed information from the address data to a predetermined storage location.

35. (currently amended) A system for retrieving and processing stored information ~~in a network containing address data~~ comprising:

a message receiver to receive a message from a remote computer in ~~[[the]]~~ a network identifying the remote computer and indicating that the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information ~~from address data~~;

a comparator for comparing the identity of the remote computer to stored identities of remote computers and, in response to a failure to identify a remote computer in the stored identities, optionally assigning an identity for the remote computer and a predetermined characteristic;

a retriever to retrieve ~~at least one~~ a characteristic of the remote computer from stored characteristics; and

a manager to assign and send a processing message to the remote computer including, address data selected by comparison of ~~at least one~~ the characteristic of the remote computer with the priority listing of the address data to retrieve, and ~~[[the]]~~ a predetermined storage location to which the processed information is to be sent~~[[.]]~~, wherein said characteristic of the remote computer comprises a measure of the network connectivity of that remote computer, and said address data is selected so as to minimize the communication cost of connection with the remote computer.

36. (currently amended) A system for retrieving and processing stored information ~~in a network containing address data, which is categorised into a priority listing,~~ comprising:

means for receiving a processing message from the central computer including address data ~~which has been~~ selected by the central computer by comparison of ~~at least one~~ a characteristic of the remote computer with a priority listing of the address data, wherein said characteristic of the remote computer comprises a measure of network connectivity of that remote computer, and said address data is selected in such a way as to minimize the communication cost of connection with the remote computer;

means for retrieving and processing information from the address data; and

means for sending the processed information from the address data to a predetermined storage location.

37. (canceled)

38. (currently amended) The system of claim ~~[[37]]~~ 36, wherein said measure of the network connectivity of the remote computer is determined with reference to at least one of ~~[[the]]~~ a plurality of server computers to which the remote computer is connected.

39. (currently amended) The system of claim 36, wherein ~~[[the step of]]~~ selecting said address data further includes a comparison of a processing characteristic of the remote computer with a priority listing of the address data.

40. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein said priority listing for a particular data address is determined on the basis of activity at that address.

41. (currently amended) The system of claim 36, wherein said ~~at least one~~ characteristic of the remote computer further comprises the time historically taken by that remote computer to process one unit of address data.

42. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol based network.

43. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a local area network.

44. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein the address data comprises a location of stored information on the Internet.

45. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein the remote computer is directly connected to the computer on which the information to be retrieved is stored, such that the remote computer is able to retrieve said information without using the Internet.

46. (original) The system of claim 36, including means for sending a message to the central computer initiated in response to a message from the central computer to ascertain if the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information from address data.

47. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein processed information is stored in the remote computer and sent to the predetermined location at predetermined times.

48. (currently amended) The system of claim 36, wherein the processing message includes a task and [[the]] raw data, and the raw data is processed in accordance with the task.

49. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein the address data comprises a batch of URLs (Universal Resource Locators).

50. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein the processed information is sent to the central computer in a compressed and streamed format.

51. (original) The system of claim 36, wherein the processed information is stored on at least one server computer communicating with the remote computer and the central computer.

52. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium containing a method for retrieving and processing stored information ~~in a network containing address data,~~ the method comprising ~~the steps of:~~

sending a message to a central computer in the network identifying a remote computer and indicating that the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information ~~from address data~~;

receiving a processing message from the central computer including address data ~~which has been~~ selected by the central computer based on ~~at least one a~~ characteristic of the remote computer, wherein said characteristic of the remote computer comprises a measure of network connectivity of the remote computer, and said address data is selected so as to minimize the communication cost of connection with the remote computer;

retrieving and processing information from the address data; and
sending the processed information from the address data to a predetermined storage location.

53. (canceled)

54. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim ~~[[53]]~~ 52, wherein said measure of the network connectivity of the remote computer is determined with reference to at least one of ~~[[the]]~~ a plurality of server computers to which the remote computer is connected.

55. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the step of selecting said address data further includes a comparison of a processing characteristic of the remote computer with a priority listing of the address data.

56. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 55, wherein said priority listing for a particular data address is determined on the basis of activity at that address.

57. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein said ~~at least one~~ characteristic of the remote computer further comprises the time historically taken by that remote computer to process one unit of address data

58. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol based network.

59. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a local area network.

60. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the address data comprises a location of stored information on the Internet.

61. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the remote computer is directly connected to the computer on which the information to be retrieved is stored, such that the remote computer is able to retrieve said information without using the Internet.

62. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the step of sending a message to the central computer is initiated in response to a message from the central computer to ascertain if the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information from address data.

63. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the processed information is stored in the remote computer and sent to the predetermined storage location at predetermined times.

64. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the processing message includes a task and [[the]] raw data, and the raw data is processed in accordance with the task.

65. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the address data comprises a batch of URLs (Universal Resource Locators).

66. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the processed information is sent to the central computer in a compressed and streamed format.

67. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 52, wherein the predetermined storage location is at least one server computer communicating with the remote computer of the central computer.

68. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium containing a method for retrieving and processing stored information in a network containing address data, which is categorised into a priority listing, the method comprising ~~the steps of:~~

 sending a message from a remote computer to a central computer in the network identifying the remote computer and indicating that the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information ~~from address data;~~

 receiving the message in the central computer and comparing the identity of the remote computer ~~to stored identities for remote computer~~ to stored identities for remote computers in the central computer;

 in response to a failure to identify the remote computer in the stored identities, optionally assigning an identity for the remote computer and a predetermined characteristic;

in response to a match identifying the remote computer in the stored identities,
retrieving at least one characteristic of the remote computer from stored characteristics
in the central computer;

assigning and sending a processing message to the remote computer including
address data selected by comparison of ~~at least one~~ a characteristic of the remote
computer with the priority listing of the address data to retrieve, wherein said
characteristic of the remote computer comprises a measure of network connectivity of
the remote computer, and said address data is selected to minimize the communication
cost of connection with the remote computer;

retrieving and processing information from the address data by the remote
computer; and

sending the processed information from the address data to a predetermined
storage location.

69. (canceled)

70. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim ~~[[69]]~~ 68,
wherein said measure of the network connectivity of the remote computer is determined
with reference to at least one of ~~[[the]]~~ a plurality of server computers to which the
remote computer is connected.

71. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein
the step of selecting said address data further includes a comparison of a processing
characteristic of the remote computer with a priority listing of the address data.

72. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein said priority listing for a particular data address is determined on the basis of activity at that address.

73. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein said ~~at least one~~ characteristic of the remote computer further comprises the time historically taken by that remote computer to process one unit of address data.

74. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol based network.

75. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the remote computer communicates with the central computer over a local area network.

76. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the address data comprises a location of stored information on the Internet.

77. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the remote computer is directly connected to the computer on which the information to be retrieved is stored, such that the remote computer is able to retrieve said information without using the Internet.

78. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein [[the step of]] sending a message to the central computer is initiated in response to a message from the central computer to ascertain if the remote computer is available to retrieve and process stored information from address data.

79. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the processed information is stored in the remote computer and sent to the predetermined storage location at predetermined times.

80. (currently amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the processing message includes a task and [[the]] raw data. and the raw data is processed in accordance with the task.

81. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the address data comprises a batch of URLs (Universal Resource Locators).

82. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the processed information is sent to the central computer in a compressed and streamed format.

83. (original) The computer-readable medium of claim 68, wherein the processed information is stored on at least one server computer communicating with the remote computer and the central computer.